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Memorandum of Conversation

PSV/MC/1

SEGANI VISIT

September 30 - October 3, 1959

Washington, D. C.

DATE: Sept. 30, 1959

The White House

SUBJECT: Khrushchev and Germany

PARTICIPANTS: US

The President  
Secretary of State Herter  
Mr. Kohler  
Col. Walters, interpreting

ITALY

Prime Minister Segni  
Foreign Minister Pella  
Mr. Straneo  
Ambassador Brosio

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After the usual greetings and complimentary exchanges, the President invited Signor Segni to open the conversation. Mr. Segni said he was happy to be the first to visit the President on the heels of a very notable other visit.

The President laughed and said that the Italian visit was certainly much easier. Segni then said that he would be very glad to have the President's impressions of the Khrushchev visit and his conversations with him.

The President said that Mr. Khrushchev was a very extraordinary personality. He was able to shift from a lively show of opposition to a friendly and cordial attitude in a matter of ten seconds or so. If Mr. Khrushchev had to accept a position against his will, he was capable during the next twenty minutes or more of expressing his displeasure - the President would not say, by bad manners, - but at least by needless remarks. The President said he was sure that Khrushchev wants a real program of disarmament but he was not sure that the Chairman was ready to pay the price of effective inspection. However, he certainly wants some relief in the disarmament field. Most of Khrushchev's conversations on disarmament had focused on the high cost of arms, particularly the advanced nuclear and missile types, and in the field of

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exploration of outer space. The President said that Khrushchev felt he must reduce his arms expenditures so that he could use the money to benefit the Soviet people. As the communique had revealed, not much substantive discussion took place. The President had certainly not undertaken to talk for his allies. However, he felt that some progress had been made in creating a situation in which further discussions could take place in a more reasonable fashion. In the end the important fact was that Khrushchev had taken off the ultimatum.

The President said Khrushchev knew very well that he, the President, would say that we are prepared to negotiate with respect to Berlin on a friendly basis. He had agreed with Khrushchev that such negotiations should be expeditious while Khrushchev had agreed that there would be no time limit. The President noted that Khrushchev had promptly confirmed the President's press conference remarks about this agreement which he thought showed some readiness on the part of Khrushchev to go along and keep his word.

The President had thought at first that Khrushchev had the notion that he could separate the American people from the US Government as respects foreign affairs. However, Khrushchev had told the President that he had changed his mind on this. The President thought that at least one reason was that so many Democrats had affirmed to Khrushchev approval of the President's policies.

Mr. Herter intervened at this time to say he thought the President was underestimating his own efforts in influencing Khrushchev, to which the President commented that - "well, we were all working on it."

Mr. Segni said that in Turkey he had found considerable concern on the part of the President and Prime Minister with respect to the Khrushchev visit. The Turks distrusted the Russians, especially now that Russia is also Communist. He thought that we must place a high value on the Turkish opinions, since they well knew the Russians and the Russian Communists. The Italians themselves had some Communist disciples in Italy. The Italian Government shared the Turkish distrust of Moscow.

The President agreed with Mr. Segni's statement, saying we must always have proof of good faith.

Mr. Segni resumed to say that the Turks felt that Khrushchev's visit to the US was not undertaken in good faith. They thought there was an attempt to split the allies. The Italians had reassured the Turks that President Eisenhower would not fall for this Soviet divisive maneuver. In saying this, they

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had known that they could count on the confidence and friendship between the President and themselves. Of course Italy, like France and Germany, he continued, has Communists inside the walls. Also, the Russians were trying to use the relaxation of tensions for their own political purposes.

..... The Italians favor high level discussions but think it essential that these not be allowed to be presented as a Communist victory, which the Communists can exploit for their own political ends. He thought it important that all members of the NATO alliance get together and decide on what proposals the West put forward.

The President commented that we in the West had been trying for years and have already put forward many proposals. Mr. Segni said it would be well to recall this publicly. The President agreed, but added that he feared the Communist propaganda was stronger than ours.

Mr. Segni repeated that it was important to avoid giving the Communists material which they could exploit for their own moral rehabilitation. He cited Togliatti as saying recently that the "barbarism of anti-Communism" should disappear from the scene. He felt it was important not to let the Communists get away with this kind of thing.

The President said in his talks with Khrushchev he had stressed the extent of the actual Western disarmament which had been undertaken after World War II. This course had been reversed, he had told Khrushchev, only as a result of Communist aggression in Korea, Berlin, Czechoslovakia and VietNam. These hostile moves had alarmed the American people. Consequently our armed forces budget, which had been below 12 billion dollars in 1949, was now four times that amount. The President pointed out that there was a large array of historical fact to show that the Western readiness to disarm was genuine and antedated the Soviet proposals.

Mr. Segni replied that this was correct. The Italians had favored these measures even before the President had gone to Geneva in 1955. He then inquired what the President thought Khrushchev seeks with respect to Berlin.

The President replied that in his talks Khrushchev had demanded that what he called the Remnants of World War II be eliminated. What Khrushchev really wants is to get our garrisons out of West Berlin. Khrushchev realizes that they are not important militarily in case of war but also that their

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presence means that any attempt to use force would precipitate war. The President said that we must admit that we are in a bad spot in Berlin, and that the situation is abnormal, with some two million West Berliners a hundred kilometres away from the borders of West Germany, to which they are related. Khrushchev had repeated his threat of concluding a peace treaty to which the President had replied that this could not affect our rights or lessen US determination to protect the freedom and security of the people of West Berlin. The President said of course Mr. Segni knew the nature of Mr. Khrushchev's proposals of last November. The President said he had asked his own people to make a new study as to how it might be possible to meet the needs of the West Berliners and the European countries concerned in general and still achieve some relaxation in the situation. He felt that we must all put our heads together and see what we could accept in the way of a solution. It was clear to him that East and West Germany were not going to be reunified for a long time. It was good to talk about reunification, but this was clearly not in the realm of immediate possibility. Consequently, to tie the question of Berlin to reunification of Germany was not a realistic approach. However, we must, of course, make sure that whatever we carry out with respect to West Berlin did not lose the freedom or security of the West Berliners and that they be protected in their communications with West Germany. It was possible that reduced garrisons attached in some way to the UN might be something that would be acceptable. He wanted to say, however, that he was thinking aloud in offering these suggestions, which he had not yet even discussed with his Secretary of State. However, he felt that there must be some method of securing a modus vivendi in Berlin between the extremes of war or surrender.

Mr. Segni said that Berlin was an important question, particularly for West German opinion. It was essential that we maintain hope in West Germany. Otherwise we would risk undermining the foundations of democracy in the Federal Republic.

..... Had any discussion taken place as to possibility of a "free city" which would include all of Berlin?

The President replied that we had proposed such a solution but it had been rejected.

Mr. Segni continued that the Italians agreed that it was not normal that a great city like Berlin should be divided. They shared the President's feeling that West Berlin with its freely elected and democratic government was really a part of

West Germany. If the Soviets could say that East Berlin were really a part of East Germany, then West Berlin was certainly a part of the German Federal Republic.

The President agreed with Mr. Segni, then turned to Secretary Wetter to inquire as to the exact situation. The Secretary explained that while West Berlin was in fact under the German basic law a part of the German Federal Republic, this particular provision of the basic law was suspended by allied directive.

Mr. Segni repeated that he felt that the President had made an important statement in emphasizing the connection between West Berlin and West Germany.

The President commented that he had insisted in his talks with Khrushchev that any Berlin solution must be acceptable to the West Berliners and to the West Germans, and that this was in fact confirmed in the communique and in his press conference.

Mr. Segni said the Italians feel that if forces in Berlin were placed under the UN, it would in fact take away some of this concept of the basic unity between West Berlin and West Germany.

The President said he did not disagree with Mr. Segni's statement. He was merely seeking methods by which we could assure some new arrangement with respect to Berlin which still would insure that any attack on the freedom of Berlin was an attack on all of us. We had had experience with the UN presence in other situations and had found that it was not necessarily a derogation of sovereignty. The West, he said, must try to find a way out of the dilemma.

Mr. Segni commented that this must be a way which did not break the spirit of the West Germans. He then went on to ask how the President saw the re-opening of negotiations - did he contemplate a resumption of the Geneva talks?

The President replied that he didn't know. He was just mulling over how we could avoid a sacrifice of the rights of the West Berliners and the West Germans and still remove the challenge of war from the situation. He commented that the Soviets had the theme of simply seeking a peace treaty. However, they made it clear that the conclusion of a peace treaty would result in a cutting off of communications and they thus sought to make us the aggressors in protecting these communications. He said it was a complicated situation - a real can of worms.

Mr. Segni referred to the President's previous statements

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that he would not attend a summit conference unless there was real hope of progress. How did the President feel on this subject now after his talks with Khrushchev?

In reply, the President referred to his remarks to the press conference on Monday, in which he had said that most of the objections that he had entertained about a meeting of the heads of government had been removed by the talks. Consequently, if the allies agree, he would personally be prepared to go to a summit meeting. The President said he thought there was no question but that the attitude and the atmosphere had changed quite a bit. There was no telling how long this changed situation would last. It could change back tomorrow. However, he thought there was every sign that Khrushchev really wanted an agreement which would help him at home and which he could get us to accept. He was sure that Khrushchev wants to raise the standards of living of the Soviet people; also that Khrushchev feels that he has some problems with the Chinese. He cited an example of the talks which had been held between Chairman McCone of AEC and Yemelyanov, the head of the Soviet Atomic Energy organization. The latter had told Mr. McCone frankly that he wanted a partnership in peaceful development of atomic energy under the IAEA so that he could reduce the drain on the Soviet budget. The Soviets simply did not have enough money for atomic development. In conclusion the President said he thinks Khrushchev realizes the Soviet Union must be more conciliatory than in the past.

Mr. Segni commented that he felt the USSR really wanted extensive help, since they had even asked Italy, a poor country, for credit.



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